



Mar 23

An Open Letter to Colton and Mehrnaz

wes dodson

Dear Colton and Mehrnaz,

Congratulations, you did it. As with all elections, the disagreements that divide were made central and the similarities that bind were backgrounded. However, through several tumultuous weeks you persevered and are now the new president and vice president of the assembly representing the official voice of the UT student body. Incumbent on your offices is the fundamental responsibility to speak that voice. Corollary to that responsibility is the duty to let students know what their voice is saying.

As president and vice president, you represent the voice of the entire student body, including those who disagree with, or are unaware of, your platform. Your supporters deserve a way to know whether you deliver on your campaign promises, and your detractors deserve access to information that might alter their assessment. The solution is greater transparency.

Student views of your new positions range the spectrum, from dismissal of them as trivial and ineffectual to deferential appreciation for the powerful role they play in representing student interests to the administration. Students must decide for themselves the truth in the matter. To do this, students need access to information on the efficacy of Student Government in representing their voices to the administration. The solution is greater transparency.

UT's journalistic organizations are the primary way that students access information about how their interests are served by UT's administrative institutions. As the new heads of the body representing the official voice of the student body, the work you do representing that voice is pertinent to student life. Student journalists at UT deserve quick and easy access to accurate information concerning the actions of Student Government. Unverifiable documents open to the public to edit, "attached documents" containing the actual budget information buried in old email list archives, fast-tracked bills with obtuse reference to previous deliberations; these are all needless impediments to accurate student journalism. The solution is greater transparency.

What does greater transparency look like? Logs of hours spent working on Student Government business with a description of time spent and any measurable effects from the work — the same measurable effects that you will hopefully cite in your résumés. Budget information that is accurate and easily available, including deliberations on the budget. Written minutes of meetings kept up to date and available. A letter to the student body acknowledging the acceptance of executive alliance stipends. An email at the beginning of the semester describing the goals of Student Government and an email at the end describing progress towards those goals. Reports from Student Government agencies on what they have done on campus to serve student interests.

All measurements are relative to a standard. So far, the only standard we have is the comportment of the previous Student Government assemblies and their less than effective attempts at transparency. The goals outlined above are just that — goals, policies to move toward. We here at *The Orator* will be diligent in assessing how your executive alliance hews to the goals above and the general tenants of transparency, with the yardstick of previous executive alliances in mind.

Service to your fellow students in the Student Government assembly is not compulsory. The burdens thereof are elective. As such, students should be able to evaluate their representatives on the merits of their policies and the efficacy of their work in representing the voice of the UT student body. We at *The Orator* ask that you, the new president and vice president of the UT Student Government, promise to increase the transparency of your assembly. Provide the data, and we at *The Orator*, UT journalists, and the UT student body will make of it what we will.

Sincerely,

*Letter written by Wes Dodson, Co-founder of *The Texas Orator*

Campus

student government, executive alliance, leadership



WES DODSON

Wes Dodson is a co-founder of *The Texas Orator* and a contributing writer on State and National Politics. He champions constitutional liberties and the exercise of reason, all while juggling school and an expensive podcast addiction.

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